1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

133 height. Clear rock-strewn streams abound, their banks
137 brightened by the deep green leaves and the bright red flowers of the *ratmal* (*Ixora coccinea*). Scattered masses of rock often of great size form convenient shelters for the Veddas, and assist the rapid drainage of the country, which does not become water-logged even during torrential rains. This beautiful country is rich in game. To the east, where many Veddas have drifted, the jungle is thicker, the land lies lower, and is generally less healthy. The Nuwaragala Hills to the north of the Nilgala ranges are perhaps the wildest part of the island and are more densely clothed in jungle, but there are plenty of streams, while the slope of the country permits of ready drainage.

The coastal zone north of Batticaloa inhabited by the coast Veddas is flat and sandy, and the vegetation though dense is often less tall and less abundant than in other parts of the country. Salt water marshes are common, and the country is cut into by numerous lagoons and creeks, often bounded by a fringe of mangroves which stretches some distance up the mouths of the rivers. Although this area may now, and
131 for yet a few years, be rightly called the Vedda country it must
161 not be thought that any considerable number of its inhabitants
563 are Veddas, or that they exercise any territorial or political influence; on the contrary, they constitute an insignificant fraction of the Tamil and Sinhalese inhabitants before whom they are rapidly disappearing, partly by intermarriage and absorption, partly owing to misery and a high death rate brought about by sheer inability to cope with the new state of affairs that the increased settlement of this, the wildest part of the island, has brought about.

Formerly the Vedda country is known to have embraced
131 the whole of the Uva, and much of the Central and North
175 Central Provinces, while there is no reason to suppose that their territory did not extend beyond these limits. Indeed there is no reasonable doubt that the Veddas are identical with the "Yakkas" of the Mahavansa and other native chronicles.

195 The seventh chapter of the Mahawansa relates the arrival in Ceylon, B.C. 543, of Vijaya who married Kuweni an aboriginal princess (*Yakkini*) and by her assistance destroyed a great

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

CHAPTER II

PRESENT CONDITION OF THE VEDDAS

WE propose to treat the Veddas under three headings :— 101

(i) Véddas.
(ii) Village Veddas.
(iii) Coast Veddas.

Although it may not be easy in every case to say into which group a given person falls, and although the proposed classification rests on no natural or known physical basis, it seems that at the present day the Veddas fall into these three groups characterised by different sociological features. The term "Rock" or "Jungle" Vedda will be avoided; it has been applied by some authors to the wilder specimens of that class which we propose to call simply Veddas.

The coast Veddas are briefly described in Chapter XII.; they live in scattered villages on the east coast and are chiefly to be found north of Batticaloa. They have much Tamil blood [563] in their veins, and though often taller than pure Veddas, some still retain an appearance which suggests their Vedda origin. This is far more marked in the males than in the females, and it appeared to us that any of the latter might have been local Tamils, whereas some of the men clearly differed from the surrounding population.

Before giving an account of the present condition of the different Vedda communities, we propose to give the substance of a number of conversations with a remarkable old Kandyan who in his boyhood, youth and manhood was closely associated with the Veddas of the Eastern Province, and whose memory certainly goes back for 80 or 90 years. In order to make his 115

[p. 29]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

shorter ceremony *ruwela*, this being an older name than *kolamaduwa*[1].

It appeared that the invocations at present in use among the Kovil Vanamai Veddas were those used in the old man's youth, for although he had not, as he stated (truthfully we believe), been closely associated with the Veddas for many years he recognised a number of Vedda invocations which were sung to him, as identical with those sung in his youth, and named the occasions on which each was used. *Maligi* was recognised as sung when honey was taken; the invocation at the beginning of the *kirikoraha* ceremony (cf. p. 285) was promptly named, and the occasions of its use pointed out, but the charm used when driving monkeys was not recognised. A song sung for amusement by the Veddas beginning *Mamini mamini ma deyo* was immediately recognised, as were two of the invocations of the Kolamaduwa ceremony, but considering how Sinhalese in substance this ceremony is this is perhaps not of much importance.

At the present day the number of Veddas living their natural forest life is necessarily few, for their territory has been gradually encroached upon by the Sinhalese who are inveterate poachers. The Veddas, who were never numerous within recent historic times, are now rapidly dying out, while many have settled among the Sinhalese and so lost their identity. We met with only four families who still led the life described by Bailey in 1863, and these were not among the Nilgala but among the Nuwaragala Hills. At Nilgala itself there are no Veddas at the present day, though the local peasant Sinhalese doubtless have much Vedda blood in their veins. The Henebedda and Danigala Veddas are the descendants of those recorded by Bailey in 1863, and the Kovil Vanamai Veddas are the descendants of those known and described by the old Kandyan who visited us at Bandaraduwa.

Hennebedda. At Hennebedda we met a number of families living together in the Bendiyagalge caves. They had come to this their largest cave, from several settlements all within a few hours' journey. The genealogies show that at least

[1] These ceremonies are described in Chapter IX.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

in one instance there had been intermarriage with Sinhalese, and we suspected this in other cases, though the majority appear to be reasonably pure-blooded.

These people make chenas[1] on which they live temporarily in bark-covered huts; Plate X, figure 1, represents the chena settlement of the local group of the Namadewa *waruge*, some of the members of which are shown in Plate X, figure 2. They gather honey and hunt, several of them possess guns, and some of them rear cattle for the Sinhalese villagers. Indeed, for Veddas their lot is singularly happy, since they live in the heart of the park country where game is still abundant. Bailey first induced some Veddas in the Nilgala district to make chenas about the middle of the last century, before which all the Veddas in this district were probably living their natural hunting, honey-gathering life.

It is not often that a community that has taken to the semi-civilised life of chena cultivation is seen, in which its members are so healthy and well fed, for Veddas dislike settling down and do not generally do so until they find they can no longer subsist on the game in the country, when they either drift into Sinhalese settlements, or make extremely rough chenas for themselves, the produce of which is seldom sufficient to feed the community. Besides which, as is the case with the Sinhalese peasants themselves, the crop is often pledged to Moormen pedlars before it is reaped. The poor Veddas then subsist as best they can on yams, honey and berries, and usually fall a prey to fever. Several Veddas in this wretched condition were seen between Namal Oya and Bandaraduwa, while those at Godatalawa were scarcely better off.

In the Nilgala district the conditions are different. Chena making and cattle rearing had been introduced while game was still abundant, families are still able to leave the chena settlement and hunt and gather honey, living during such times in rock shelters within their own hunting boundary. However, the

[1] Bailey defines a chena as "a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again: it is recleared again after intervals of from five to ten years," *Trans. Ethnol. Soc. N.S.* Vol. II, 1863, p. 282.